



Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



March 17, 2015

Sarasota County Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) Raise Awareness for National Kick Butts Day ***Local Students Organize Anti-Tobacco Rally***

SARASOTA COUNTY — Sarasota County's Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) are fighting back and raising awareness of the tactics used every day by Big Tobacco to find 'replacement' smokers. Organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and sponsored by the United Health Foundation, Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youth to fight back against Big Tobacco.

In observance of Kick Butts Day, local SWAT youth are hosting an anti-tobacco rally at the Robert and Joan Lee Boys and Girls Club in Venice on Saturday, March 28. This rally will feature Joey Panek and Christine Alexander as keynote speakers who will lead SWAT members in various improvisational acting activities that will relate to tobacco prevention and build leadership and advocacy skills. Joey Panek is a local web and media personality from ABC 7 and www.HowBoutJoey.com. Christine Alexander has been the owner and director of Lazy Fairy Improv since 2008. She is also the Founding Member of FST Improv and a Locally World Famous Improvisor. Performing together or apart, Christine and Joey are Sarasota's funny performers who always have big smiles on their faces and touting their slogan, "If it feels good to laugh, then laugh to feel good." Their shows have helped raise over \$1 million for charities like Girls, Inc., Goodwill, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer and many others.



"This rally will help educate and train our SWAT members on ways to raise awareness to their peers and the community on the dangers of tobacco use and tactics the tobacco companies use to hook young people on their deadly products," said Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County Students Working Against Tobacco Coordinator Hilary Woodcum. "Every day in Florida, 89 people will die from a tobacco related illness. Big Tobacco is going after our youth, looking for 'replacement' smokers, but Sarasota County's SWAT students are standing up against these companies."

In addition to the Kick Butts Day rally, today, Tuesday, March 17, the Sarasota County Commission presented four SWAT youth from Pine View School with a Proclamation recognizing Kick Butts Day in Sarasota County.

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MEDIA NOTES:

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These SWAT members serve on the Sarasota County SWAT Leadership group and the Tobacco Free Partnership of Sarasota County.

"Having support from our local decision makers for the work we are doing as SWAT members is extremely important. We were all excited to have the opportunity to receive this Proclamation from our County Commissioners," said Evianna Gianoplus, President of the Sarasota County SWAT Leadership group and member of the statewide SWAT Youth Advocacy Board (YAB).

ABOUT TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA

The Department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to use one of the state's three ways to quit. Since 2007, more than 126,140 Floridians have successfully quit, using one of these free services. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. During 2014, the Department is recognizing 125 years of public health in Florida with educational opportunities and events. Please visit www.FLHealth125.gov for more information.

Follow us on Twitter at @HealthyFla and on Facebook. For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.floridahealth.gov.

For more information about Sarasota County's Tobacco Prevention Program, or to learn ways to get involved please visit <http://sarasota.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wellness-programs/tobacco-prevention/index.html> or call 941-861-2805.

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